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ABSTRACT

Preschool personnel (61 teachers and 34 administrators) from six locations throughout Texas were surveyed in order to describe the types of materials purchased and desired for preschool settings. A survey questionnaire was designed to address the following major questions: (1) who selects and buys materials? (2) how much money is spent on materials? (3) what type of media and materials are currently used? (4) how do personnel find out about materials? and (5) what types of media and materials are needed in the future? Results of the survey indicated that approximately $300 is spent per classroom on a yearly basis and that individual teachers personally purchase about $100 of additional materials. Purchases are made primarily on the basis of items seen in training workshops or displays, local stores, and catalogs. Storybooks, manipulatives, toys, and games are very high purchase items (100%). In terms of future purchases, much of the same items are desired, plus records and pictures. Well over half of this group spend more than five hours of personal time each week in making materials. If given a choice, respondents would buy items which require some preparation time but provide greater quantity rather than a smaller number of completed items. (Author/SS)

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MEDIA AND MATERIALS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD IN THE 1980's

A SURVEY OF PRESCHOOL PERSONNEL

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MEDIA AND MATERIALS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD IN THE 1980's
A SURVEY OF PRESCHOOL PERSONNEL

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In the years past, the term "preschoolers" meant children who stayed at home until they entered school. For those few children whose mothers worked outside the home, a maid, relative or neighbor provided child care on an individual basis within a home setting. Times have changed. During the 1970's, more preschoolers than ever before were in group child care settings. Combine dramatic increase in the number of working mothers and the demonstrated value of early education and the provision of state and federally supported programs for selected groups of children with an increase in the number of children under the age of six, and you will have an even larger number of children in child care settings during the 1980's.

In 1965, only 35 percent of the working mothers had preschool children. Most mothers, in other words, waited until their children were older before they went to work. By 1976, the figure had increased to 49 percent (Womens Bureau, 1977). As Table I illustrates, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of working mothers of children under the age of three as well as mothers of children who are three to five years of age. These figures reflect information available only through 1978. Considering the general economic condition today, there is little doubt that the 1980 figures will be even higher.

Table 1

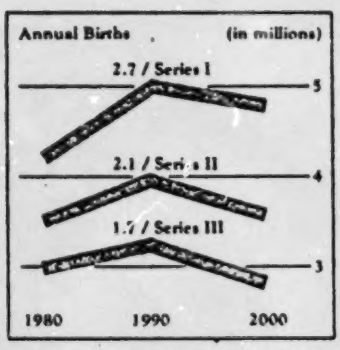
Rate of Increase of Working Mothers*

	0-3	3-5	6-18
1971	27%	38%	52%
1976	34%	47%	56%
1978	37%	50%	57%
Increase (1971-1978)	10%	12%	5%
1980's	?	?	

*Figures taken from Women's Bureau, 1977, Fertility of American Women, 1978.

The number of young children in both public child care (Day Care and Head Start) and private child care centers has increased. In addition, many young children now attend public schools in special programs such as Early Childhood Programs for the Handicapped or Bilingual and Migrant Programs for four and five-year-olds. The availability of special programs and the increase in the number of working mothers will result in more young children being cared for and receiving instruction in centers and schools.

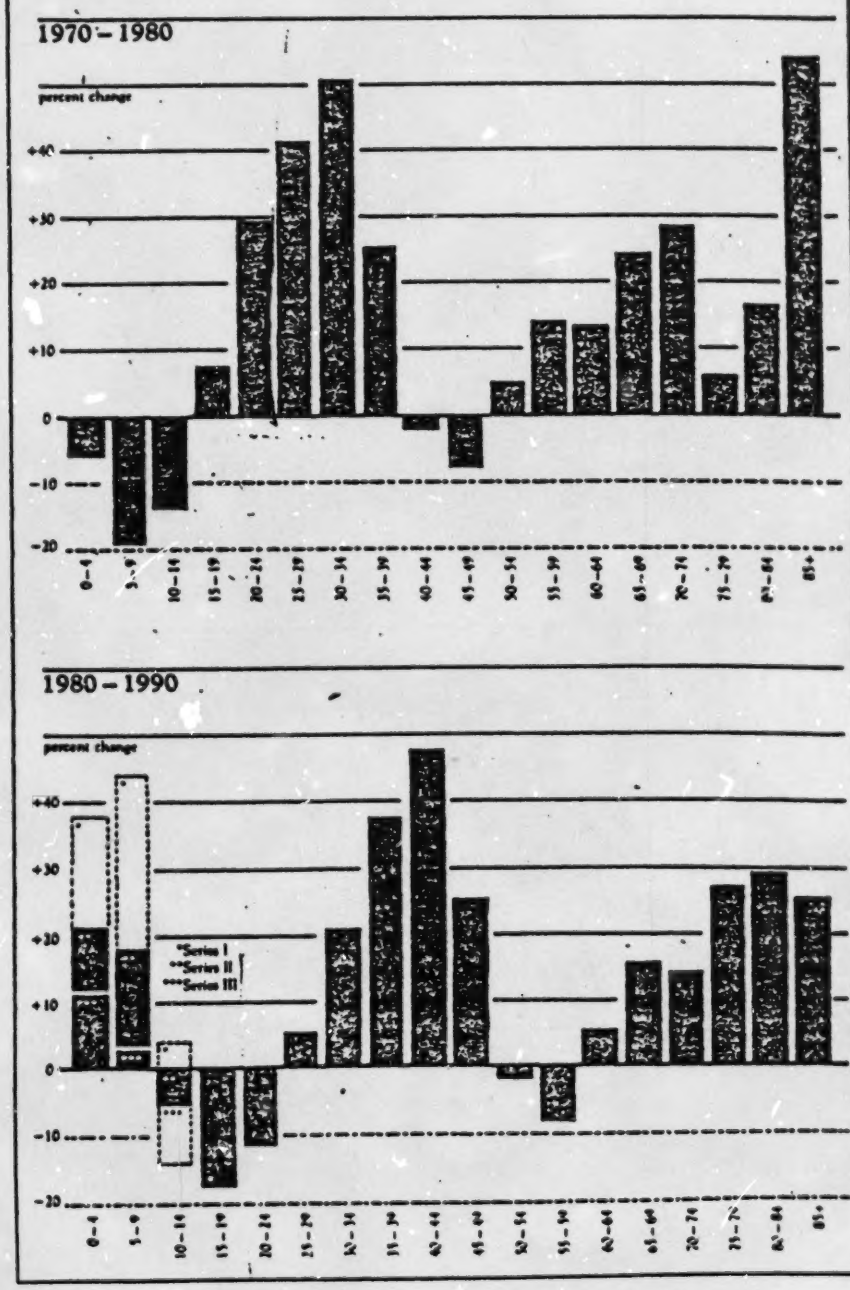
The total number of children in the birth to six age group will increase during the 1980's. If the birth rate should increase, the number of births will be much higher. The following graph reproduced from "Demographics of the 1980's" by Reynolds, Robey, and Russell (American Demographics, Jan.1980, p.15) illustrates projected changes in age groups over the next ten years. Differences in birth to 14 groups are shown for fertility rates of 1.7 (Series III) 2.1 (Series II), and 2.7 (Series I).



Future population size is influenced heavily by assumptions about the average number of lifetime births per woman. This chart shows total U. S. births projected to the year 2000 under three different fertility assumptions commonly used by the Census Bureau.

A Changing Age Structure

Some age groups that grew in the 1970s will decline in the 1980s, while others will experience greater growth.



These facts lead to one conclusion: there will be a substantial increase in the number of preschool children attending some type of child care program during the 1980's. Personnel serving these children will need media, materials and training.

Preschool programs are quite different from the traditional elementary and secondary educational programs in which workbooks, paper and pencil are the mainstays and a class of 20 to 30 students use the same textbook. A variety of media and materials are used by and with young children. Although child development texts and journal articles often list or describe materials, little data is available on the types of media and materials used by preschool personnel or the types of materials that are desired. Preschool teachers are known for their creativity in the making of their own classroom materials. Is this out of necessity, because needed materials are not commercially available - or is it by choice? What kind of materials do they presently purchase or plan to purchase? If given a choice, would teachers buy or make an item?

To address these points and other related questions, a survey was conducted in six Texas sites representing a combination of urban and rural areas and serving Anglo, Mexican American, and Black populations. All sites serve three to five-year-old children, with some sites providing after school care for children through age twelve. A total of 95 persons responded to the questionnaire, including 61 classroom teachers and 34 administrators (supervisory, center directors, etc.). Sites represented and the areas served included:

1. Amarillo - located in the northern Panhandle area of Texas, serving a small urban area (150,000) and surrounding rural areas.

2. Plainview - located in North Central Texas and serving a rural area;
3. San Marcos - located in the Central Texas area, serving a rural area of small towns under 20,000;
4. San Antonio - a large urban area in Central Texas;
5. Nacogdoches/Beaumont - both of which are located in East Texas, and include one small city (less than 100,000) and many rural communities.

The survey questionnaire (see Appendix A) was designed to address the following major questions:

1. Who selects and buys materials?
2. How much money is spent on materials?
3. What types of media and materials are currently used?
4. How do personnel find out about materials?
5. What types of media and materials are needed in the future?

Responses to these questions and others are summarized in the following sections:

Who selects and buys materials?

Everyone in preschool program seems to have a hand in selecting materials, including directors and supervisors as well as teachers and aides. Actual purchases are made by directors and other administrators. In addition to center or school purchases, individual teachers and administrators make personal purchases.

How much money is spent on materials?

Seventy-nine persons responded to the question of how much money

was spent by the center or school for each classroom over the past twelve months. Thirty-two (32) percent estimated a per-classroom expenditure of over $500; twenty-six percent spent $300 and twenty-four percent spent between $100 and $300. The remainder (eighteen percent) estimated a per classroom expenditure of less than $100. Those who did not respond were classroom aides or teachers who said they had no idea how much had been spent. All of the administrators (N=34) answered this question, and generally stated higher figures than did the teachers. In view of the responses, it is safe to conclude that the per-classroom expenditure averages over $300.

Eighty five persons provided an estimate of their per-month individual expenditures. Over half the group spend at least $10 per month and twenty five percent spend over $20 per month. This indicates that an additional $100 plus is often spent on classroom materials.

What types of media and materials are currently used?

Use and purchase are not necessarily synonymous. Sometimes media and materials are borrowed, especially high-cost items. Respondents were given a list of types of materials (videotapes, movies, pictures, games, etc.) and were asked first to check items used since the previous June. Then respondants were asked whether the items were center-purchased, personally-purchased, or borrowed. There was a very clear and consistent division between types of media and materials which were used on a limited basis, versus those types which were used extensively.

Limited use media and materials

Videotapes, movies, filmstrips and slides, transparencies, and

audiotapes were used on a limited basis, i.e., by less than a third of the total group of 95 respondants.

Videotapes were seldom used - Only three persons (a coordinator and two head teachers) reported using videotapes. The videotapes, borrowed from a Resource Center, were used for staff training, not for child-instruction.

Movies were used infrequently- Only 22 persons reported using movies. In three of the sites, administrators used movies for staff training only. In a fourth site (San Antonio) a few teachers (N=6) used movies in the classroom. These teachers have access to a well-stocked Resource Room as well as to a public library which loans out movies.

Filmstrips and slides - Filmstrips and slides fared a little better. They were used by 21 administrators for staff training and by 19 teachers in the classroom. Of the 40 reported users, 21 purchased or ordered and the others borrowed the media.

Transparancies - Sixteen (16) respondents reported using transparancies. Again, this was primarily for staff training.

Audoitapes - These were reported as used by only 10 persons, half of whom were administrators. Audiotapes usually accompany filmstrips and slides (reported as being used by 40 persons) yet, only 10 persons reported using audiotapes. The possibility exists that respondents did not understand the term and perhaps the response would have been different if "tape recordings" or "cassette-tapes" had been used.

Table 3 summarizes reported use of the different types of media.

Table 3: Limited Use Media

Media Type	Used By Teachers	Used By Administrators
Videotapes		3
Movies	6	16
Filmstrips/Slides	19	21
Transparancies	5	11

Videotapes, movies, filmstrips, slides, transparancies and audiotapes share a common denominator. They all require equipment, expensive, breakable equipment. Preschool classrooms or centers usually do not have such equipment readily available. Breakage is also a consideration. For example, in one location, cassette tape recorders are no longer purchased from center budgets. The recorders were easily broken by children or else disappeared. Less mobile record players and records are used instead of audiocassettes.

Will the availability of such equipment change? Probably not. This type of equipment is expensive to purchase and upkeep is high. Currently available movies, videos, filmstrips, etc. are not designed to hold the attention of very young children who sit still for only short time periods. Also, young children learn best through active involvement - - touching, holding, moving, and doing, rather than sitting. Children themselves, as well as teachers, who have been taught that children learn through involvement, negate a substantial increase in using this type of media.

Movies and videos are used for staff training. A need for better quality training media and more selection was stated by several administrators responsible for staff development. However, training media must be carefully designed if it is to be successful, and media is not a substitute for direct training.

Frequent-use media and materials

Other types of media and materials are used very frequently. In fact the following types were reported as used by 100 percent of the respondents: storybooks, games, manipulatives (puzzles, blocks, etc.),

toys (dolls, wagons, etc.). These materials were purchased by centers, purchased by individuals, and borrowed from resource rooms or libraries. Posters and pictures were used by more than seventy five percent of the respondants.

Activity books and professional books were used by slightly more than fifty percent.

Workbooks and dittos were used by only twenty-five percent of the respondents. This included the seven teachers responsible for after-school or summer care of six-to-twelve-year-olds and twelve teachers of kindergarten children.

What do preschool staff personally purchase?

Personal purchases were highest for the following: storybooks, professional books, activity books, and toys. Over half the respondants buy these items with their own money. Games, teaching pictures, posters, and records were purchased by 30 percent or more of the respondents. Less than 25 percent spent their own money for workbooks and manipulatives.

How do you find out about or order materials?

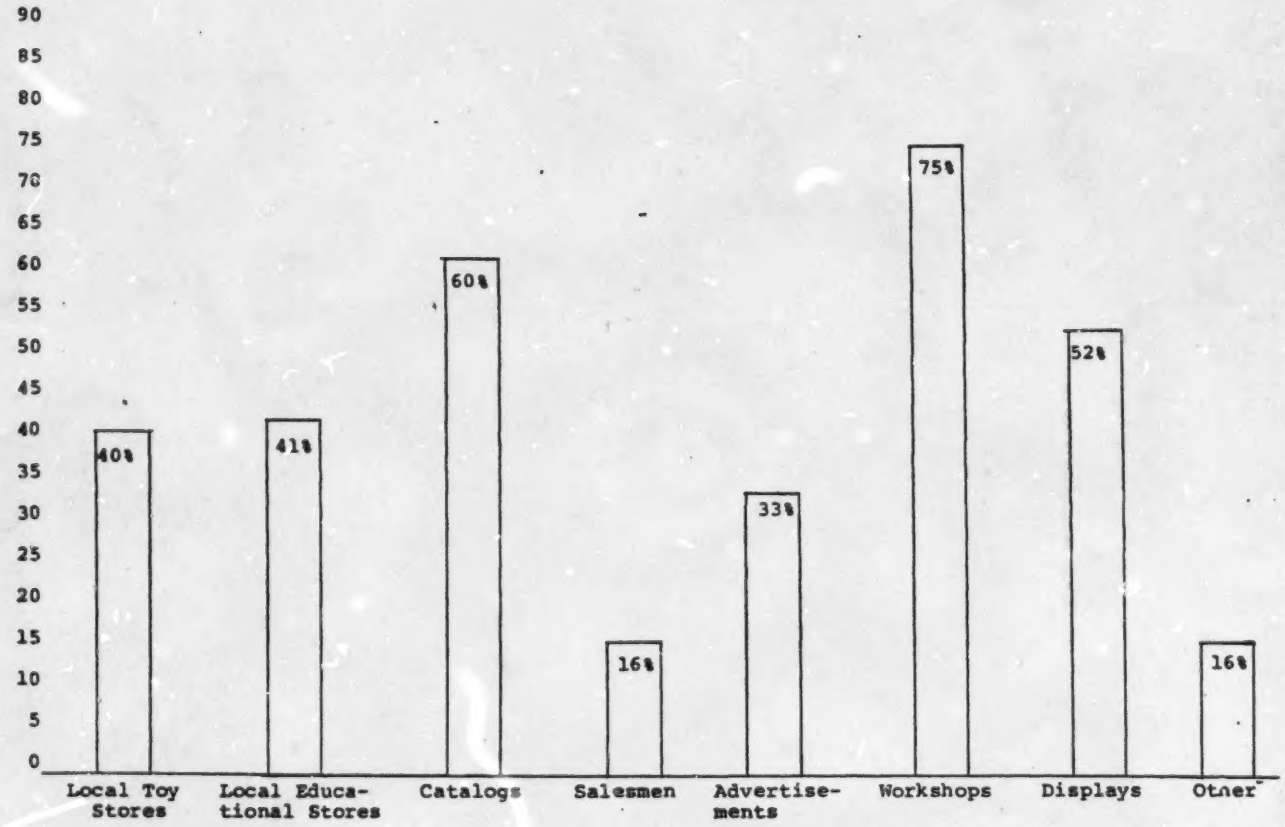
In elementray and secondary schools, textbooks or curricula programs are reviewed by textbook committees and purchase en masse for a school district or state. This type of system does not operate for pre-school programs. Preschool personnel purchase commercial materials on a more individualized basis.

Worshops, catalogs, and displays at meetings or conventions are clearly the primary sources of information. Local toy stores and local

educational stores, as well as advertisements were cited as information sources for more than 30 percent of the respondents. Information sources are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

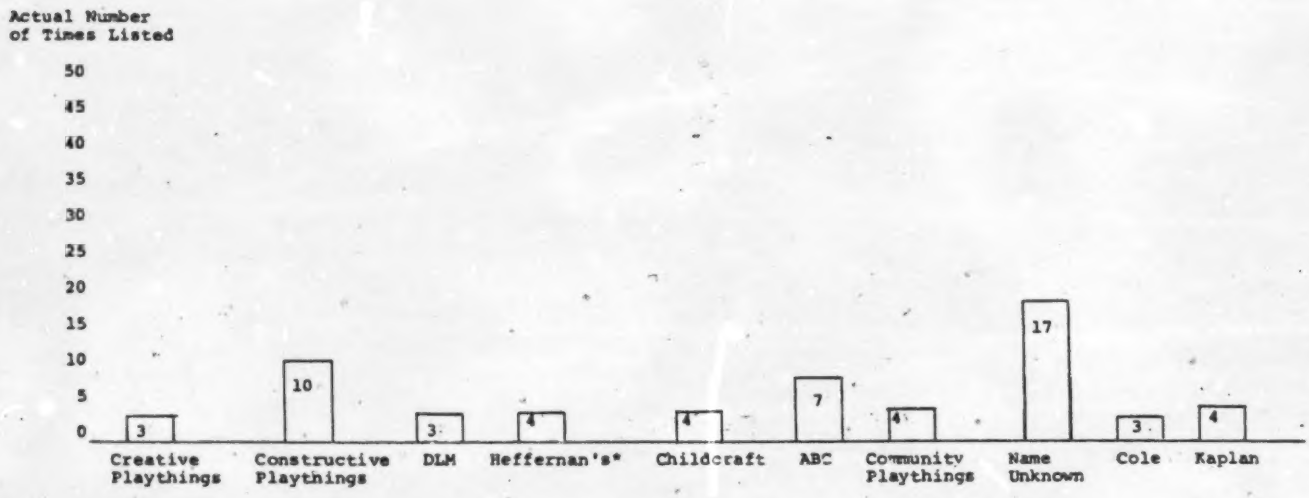
How Do You Find Out About or Order Materials?
(Respondants N=92)



A related question was "Do you receive catalogs and if so, from what companies?" Fifty three of the 82 respondents question checked receiving catalogs from publishers. However, when asked to name a publisher, only 26 persons could do so, and this included naming of magazines and journals. Publishers identified by name and the actual number of times named are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Do You Receive Catalogs?

29 No 53 Yes



*Heffernan's and Cole are Educational Supply Stores which also distribute catalogs.

Others mentioned only once: Instructor, Teacher, Parents, Child Development, Early Learning (Magazines/Journals), Sears, Roebuch, American Desk, E.T.A.

Future Purchases

Several questions were asked related to future purchases and preferences. One set of questions dealt with time versus money investment. Storybooks are used daily by all preschool teachers, therefore a question was asked related to desired illustrations. Finally, respondants were asked to identify specific types of child-use and teacher-use items they would like in the future.

Time versus Money

Preschool teachers, often spend time making their own materials. In training workshops, they will stay overtime to copy ideas for making materials and they usually ask for handouts on how to make materials.

Some professionals are critical of teacher-made materials and consider making materials a waste of time, money and effort. Some of these criticism are justified. However, there are also certain advantages. When teachers invest their own time and energy into making a material, the material is used. The material often is individualized, intended for teaching a specific concept or for a certain child. The material serves a purpose for which a commerical item is unavailable or too expensive. Three questions were asked related to teacher constructed materials:

"Approximately how much time do you spend each week on making classroom materials?" Most (80%) of the teachers responded to this question, but only 60% of the administrators responded. Teachers who did not respond were primarily those responsible for the care of infants, thus, the question was not particularly relevant to them.

Responses are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

No. of Hours	No. of Teachers
1 - 4	34 (Incl. 13 administrators)
5 - 10	33
Over 10	4
No response	24 (13 administrators; 11 teachers)

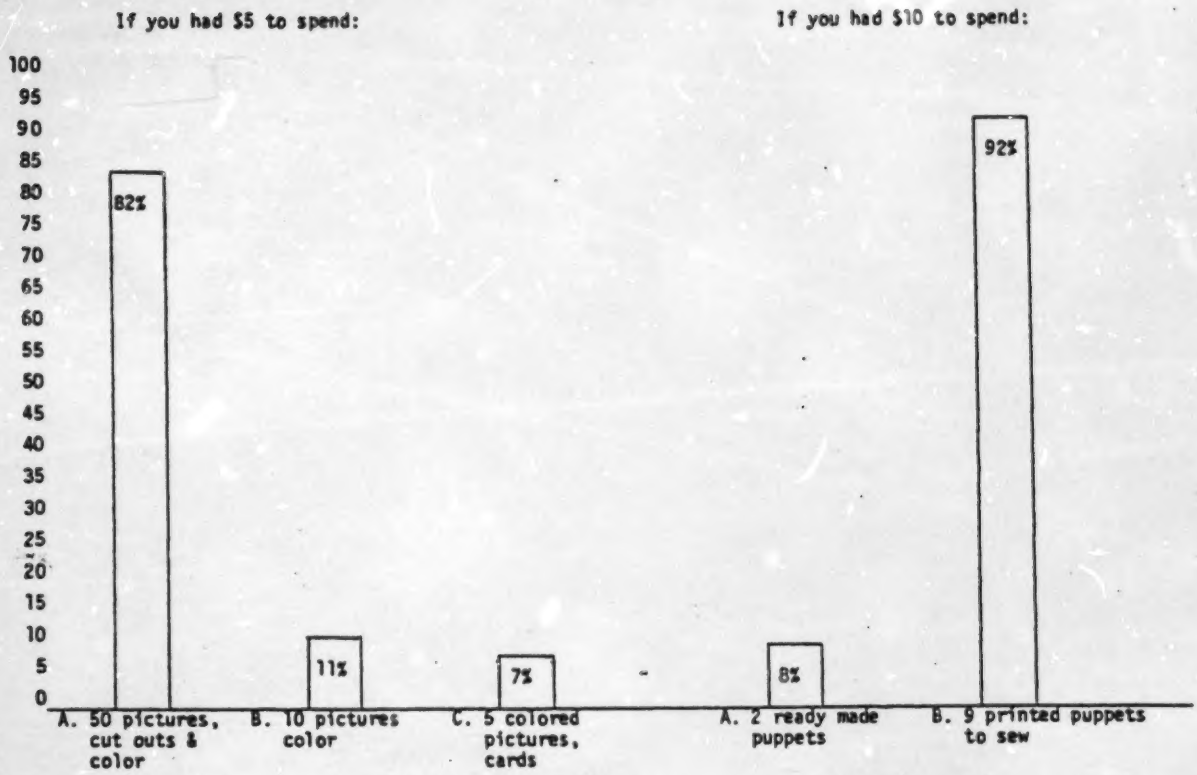
Two questions with alternative answers were related to making materials and preferred use of purchasing dollars. The questions asked and the choice alternatives were:

1. If you had $5 to spend, would you: (circle one)
   a. Buy a book of 50 pictures to cut out, color and make into picture cards?
   b. Buy one set of 10 black and white picture cards to color yourself?
   c. Buy one set of 5 picture cards in color?
2. If you had $10 to spend, would you: (circle one)
   a. Buy 2 ready-made hand puppets
   b. Buy puppet-printed fabric for 8 puppets and sew them together yourself?

From the responses shown in Figure 3, it is obvious that both teachers and administrators would choose to spend time making or completing an item in order to get more for their money. Eighty two (82) percent would make their own picture cards and 92 percent would sew up puppets.

Figure 3

"Making" versus "Buying"



There are several possible interpretations to this overwhelmingly consistent response. Dollars are always limited and many materials are needed for preschoolers. Economics alone may be the reason that over 90 percent are willing to spend their time to have more material. However, there may be other reasons also. Preschool teachers are usually quite creative and innovative. Perhaps those who choose to work with young children have an internal desire to add their own creativity or individual touch to the materials they use.

Illustrations

Storytelling is daily activity in every preschcol classroom. Therefore the following specific question was asked about storybooks. What type of illustrations or pictures do your children like best?

Respondents definitely preferred color to black and white. Realistic illustrations were preferred to abstract illustrations. Photographs were followed in order of preference by cartoons and simple line drawings. Detailed drawings were least preferred, with detail preferred primarily by those who work with school age children in after school programs.

The comparison of preference for cartoons and non-preference for detail is interesting when one considers the types of children's books which appear to be high-sales items. For example, illustrations in Dr. Seuss books and are very detailed and cartoon-types. Teachers were divided in discussing these illustrations and whether children actually preferred them. This is an area in which research is needed to determine preferences as well as instructional value. Eighty four persons responded to this item. This was not a forced choice item., i.e., respondents could check as many categories as they wished. Only one person checked all categories. However, this data would be more definitive if specific examples of each category were given and respondents required to choose between types of illustrations. Table 5 shows the responses.

Table 5

Characteristics	No. of Responses
Color	84
Black and white	7
Realistic	50
Abstract	7
Photos	56
Cartoons	51
Simple line drawings	35
Detailed drawings	10

Future Purchases

Purchases can be categorized as child-use and teacher-use items. Questions were asked related to both areas of future needs. Future purchases for child-use materials were similar but not identical to current frequently-used items. Table 6 shows, in rank-order of preference, what the 82 respondents to this part of the survey would like to buy.

Table 6

Materials	Times Checked
Storybooks	82
Toys	78
Games	74
Records	67
Manipulatives	65
Pictures	65
Workbooks	39

Information on desired teacher-use items is not as definitive. Possible materials for teachers were listed in a more complex manner, combining topics or content and format in a matrix. Many respondents did not complete this section of the survey, or checked all items, or answered in a unique manner. This part of the questionnaire was simplified after the first two administrations. Obtained data was not the same for all groups. Therefore, responses have been grouped in with approximate percentages of responses shown. The following topics are of concern to at least seventy five percent of those responding: Parent Involvement; Language Development; Language Activities; Art Activities; Science Activities; Learning Centers; Handicalled Children and Music Activities. Other topics checked by at least one-half the

group included: Outdoor Activities, Health and Safety, Child Development, Classroom Management, Pre-Math Activities, and Pre-Reading Activities.

Preferred format varied in relation to the topic or the position of the person responding. Supervisors, directors and others responsible for training would include filmstrips, slides and audiotapes as well as movies in future purchases. Teachers prefer books and pamphlets and administrators also checked pamphlets and books as materials they would purchase.

SUMMARY

Preschool personnel (61 teachers and 34 administrators, i.e., directors, supervisors, coordinators) from six locations throughout Texas were surveyed in order to describe the types of materials purchased and desired for preschool settings. On a yearly basis approximately $300 is spent per classroom, and individual teachers personally purchase about $100 of additional materials. Purchases are made primarily on the basis of items seen in training workshops or displays, local stores, and catalogs. Yet, few respondents receive catalogs from publishers. Audio visual materials (videotapes, movies, filmstrips and slides) are not high-purchase items. When used, they are mostly borrowed for staff training rather than for child instruction. Storybooks, manipulatives, toys, and games are very high purchase items (100%).

In terms of future purchases, storybooks, manipulatives, games, toys, records and pictures are desired. Preferred illustrations are photographs or realistic, simple-line drawings or cartoons in color. Well over half of this group spend more than five hours of personal time each week in making materials. If given a choice, respondents would buy items which require some preparation time but provide greater quantity rather than a smaller number of completed items. For their own information and training, respondents are interested in the topics of parent involvement; language development and activities; activities in art, science and music, and handicapped children.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SPECIAL PROJECTS DIVISION
SOUTHWEST EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY
211 E. 7TH ST., AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701

INFORMATION FOR PUBLISHERS

NAME_____

CENTER_____

POSITION_____

AGES OF CHILDREN_____

THIS YEAR

Since last summer . . . . . .

What types of materials have you used in your classroom or Center?
(Below - check items used in left column)

How or where did you get the materials?

A. Did you personally buy the material?

B. Did the center or school buy the material?

C. Did you borrow the material from the Library or Resource Room?

(Below - in the right hand columns, check where or how you got the material)

Check Items Used		A. I Bought It	B. School/ Center Bought It	C. Borrowed- Library Resource Room
	Movies			
	Videotapes			
	Filmstrips			
	Slides			
	Records			
	Audiotapes			
	Overhead Transparancies			
	Games			
	Manipulatives (puzzels, blocks)			
	Toys (dolls, wagons, trikes)			
	Professional books			
	Posters, Bulletin Board Pictures			
	Workbooks, Ditto Masters			
	Storybooks			
	Pictures for Teaching			
	Activity Books			

- Who chooses the materials you use?_____

- For your classroom, how much would you estimate has been spent on all types of materials since last summer?

  ___Less than $100 ___$100-$300 ___$300-$500 ___Over $500

- On the average, about how much do you personally spend each month?

  ___Nothing ___$5 or less ___$5-$10 ___$10-$20 ___ Over $20

- About how much time do you spend making materials each week?

  Number of hours_____

- If you had $5 to spend, would you (circle one)

  A. Buy a book of 50 pictures to cut out, color and make into picture cards

  B. Buy one set of 10 black and white picture cards and color them yourself.

  C. Buy one set of 5 picture cards in color

- If you had $10 to spend, would you (circle one)

  A. Buy 2 ready-made hand puppets

  B. Buy puppet-printed fabric for 8 puppets and sew them together yourself?

- How do you find out about or order materials?

  _____local toy stores
  _____local educational stores
  _____catalogs
  _____salesmen
  _____advertisements in magazines or journals
  _____workshops
  _____displays at meetings or conventions
  Other:_____
  _____
  _____

- Do you receive catalogs from publishers? ____No ____Yes
  If yes, which ones?

- What kinds of illustrations or pictures do your CHILDREN like best?

  _____black/white _____realistic _____simple line drawings
  _____color _____cartoons _____detailed drawings
  _____abstract _____photographs

----IN THE FUTURE----

WHAT KINDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD MATERIALS SHOULD COMMERCIAL PUBLISHERS DEVELOP AND PRODUCE IN THE 1980's?

Materials for Children (check the things you would buy)

_____Toys What kind?_____

_____Manipulatives What kind?_____

_____Games What kind?_____

_____Pictures What kind?_____

_____Photographs What kind?_____

_____Tapes/Records What kind?_____

_____Storybooks What kind?_____

_____Workbooks What kind?_____

Materials for Teachers - What topics or type of information would you like for yourself?

Topics or Content:

___ Child Development	___ Learning Centers	___ Health & Safety
___ Parent Involvement	___ Handicapped Children	___ Using Materials
___ Language Development	___ Making Materials	___ Music Activities
___ Art Activities	___ Outdoor Activities	___ Pre-reading Activities
___ Science Activities	___ Language Activities	___ Classroom Management
___ Pre-Math Activities	Other?_____	

How do you prefer to learn?

___ Books	___ Videotapes	___ Filmstrips
___ Pamphlets	___ Movies	___ Slides

Other:_____

_____